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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Subject: "THEY KEPT THE FARM FIRES BURNING." Information from the Farm Security Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

If you are a farm wife and your husband donned a uniform to serve in the armed forces, chances are you didn't sit out the war either. You were left with a big job on your hands. Well, thousands of other farm women over the country were in the same boat. In one way or another they kept the farm fires burning along with the home fires, and rendered distinguished service on the home front.

Naturally I don't know what your story is, but I believe you'll be interested in a few other women's stories. These are from the Farm Security Administration because each woman I'll mention happens to be the wife of an FSA borrower..... Let's see, we might start with Mrs. William Goodwin of Chariton, Iowa. When Bill Goodwin answered the Navy's call for construction engineers, Mrs. Goodwin and their two school-age children made plans to keep a 117-acre farm producing. First they let a neighbor take over the crop acres on a share basis, then they converted the rest of the place into a stock farm. Mrs. Goodwin began raising hogs and, as a side-line, kept a good-size poultry flock. Although she herself did most of the farm work, she was ably assisted by 13-year-old Sharon and 10-year-old Danny, and the three ran the farm at a good profit.

Near Tuttle, North Dakota, Donald Simpson and his wife were making a good beginning on their 200-acre farm when Donald got drafted. That was in the fall of 1942. Don was glad to join up and do his part, especially when his wife insisted she would keep things going at home. She kept her promise and also cared for their 18-months-old baby. In one summer alone, she fattened and sold a bunch of hogs for $1,000 and applied the entire amount to repaying a farm ownership loan from the Government. She also kept some chickens, and dairy cows from which she sold dairy products.

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Three years ago, Mrs. Roy Berghaus of Farmington, Missouri became "head man" on her husband's 125-acre dairy farm. At that time, Roy joined the Navy Seabees and went off to help build fighting bases for Uncle Sam somewhere in the South Pacific. He left behind his wife and their four small daughters only 10, 9, 7, and 4 years old.

Not being farm-wise but anxious to make good, Mrs. Berghaus talked things over with the Farm Security supervisor and made plans for handling crops and livestock. Among other things she arranged to get a "ladies model" tractor and other equipment light enough for a woman to operate. At last report she and her four "farmerette field hands" were doing fine - making a good living on the farm but looking forward to the time a certain Seabee would come home and swap his uniform for a pair of overalls. Mrs. Berghaus said she thinks farming is all right for women and children in an emergency, but wouldn't like to take it on as a permanent proposition.

Mrs. Clifford Hoffman of Van Wert County, Ohio was also left with four young children to run a farm, when her husband became a G.I. Before Cliff left for the Navy, he had started building up a purebred dairy herd and didn't want to abandon it. So Mrs. Hoffman arranged to carry on alone. She did sell a few head of cattle but, to replace some of the milk income, she increased her poultry flock and raised a bigger garden. Actually, she not only kept up production but increased it on the farm. She raised 20 percent more corn, three times more oats, about 75 percent more soybeans, and planted an extra five acres in wheat. Along with farm increases, she made three times the scheduled repayment on a farm ownership loan.

These women are representative of the thousands of farm wives over the country who were good soldiers during the war.

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